

THE WINGFIELD SCULLS

BRITISH AMATEUR SCULLING CHAMPIONSHIP AND CHAMPIONSHIP OF THE THAMES



2001 Championship

Despite a rough night as everyone gathered at LRC for the 10am briefing the water was flat. An ominous headwind along the Eyot had been noticed. Paul Reedy of LRC opened up the workshop so that the briefing could take place in the warm. A few Champions were present senior among them was Doug Melvin, Graeme Mulcahy (umpire), Chris Baillieu followed on a bicycle, the secretary Wade Hall-Craggs and treasurer Martin Kettle. Perhaps most surprising Sir Steven Redgrave was able to attend in between City meetings, but he was able to start the Championship. On behalf of the Wingfield committee Sir Steven accepted a new flag for the Championship from James Wingfield of the Wingfield Family Society. The committee, made up of the previous winners, are particularly pleased that the Wingfield family are maintaining an interest in their eponymous Championship.

Graeme Mulcahy brought the scullers to the mark exactly level, but a slight pause gave Gale a lead that he capitalised on. Lawson drew up to Gale quickly but otherwise little separated the field. Chisholm feeling the pressure of the outside station was still at 43 at LRC. The umpire had to warn Gardner down the boats and again nearing the football ground. By the Black buoy Lawson at 32 had a two length lead on Gale who was level with Gardner, with Chisholm and Collins level half a length back. Gardner's errant steering took the group of three scullers off over the flats, with his stern catching Collins' bow as he corrected. This manoeuvre left Gale isolated on Surrey and Lawson a breathing space in which to settle into his lead. At Barn Elms Collins was through Chisholm and drew level with Gardner. By the Milepost the race had broken down into a double duel plus one, with Gardner versus Collins, Gale versus Chisholm and Lawson in the clear.

Times to the Mile Lawson (30/31) 4.36, Gardner (32) 4.40, Collins (30) 4.41, Chisholm (34) 4.44, Gale 4.45

As they progressed to Hammersmith Gale moved away from Chisholm and Collins from Gardner.

Times to Hammersmith Lawson 8.05, Gardner 8.13, Collins 8.14, Gale 8.20, Chisholm 8.26

The headwind and cheers from some of his athletes at Latymer Upper roused Gale while Lawson and Gardner faltered. Lawson used the luxury of his lead took to the shelter of the bank along the Eyot. Gardner came under pressure from Collins and Gale. Chisholm stayed out in the stream but that couldn't save him from being overtaken by the umpire as the others got close to each other.

Times to Chiswick Steps Lawson 13.01, Collins 13.18, Gardner 13.21, Gale 13.25, Chisholm 13.46

Gale came out of the Eyot in a much better rhythm and with the bit between his teeth passed a stiffening Gardner to challenge Collins.

Times to Barnes Bridge Lawson 17.54, Collins 18.13, Gale 18.20, Gardner 18.32

Collins had sculled smoothly through the whole race so had enough left to hold off Gale's challenge and the order remained unchanged to the finish. Lawson crossed the line in a respectable time.

Times to Finish Lawson 21.41, Collins 22.04, Gale 22.12, Gardner 22.33, Chisholm 23.00

Lawson learned from last year's Championship and had taken confidence from his performance, his win at HRR, Small final win at the Worlds in GB2x and more recently winning the Fours' Head and only being beaten by Pinsent and Cracknell at the Indoor Rowing Championships all added to this. In an open field he took control of the race well and stayed out of trouble. Let us hope he can use this win to give him the confidence to perform well on the international stage.

The presentation of Henry Wingfield's silver sculls took place at Tideway Scullers, carried out by Chas Newens Master of the Worshipful Company of Watermen and Lightermen. He reminded us all just how many Championships he had followed and was proud to be invited to present the Sculls. He thanked all the competitors for an excellent race and stressed how important it is to keep the river alive.

The 2002 Championship will be raced on 7th November at 13.45, heats if necessary will be on 5th November at midday. Those who consider themselves fast enough to enter should contact the Hon. Sec on O.W.Hall-Craggs@durham.ac.uk, by 28th October.